

Current
Policy No. 277

U. S. DEPOSITORY DOCUMENT
JUN 8 1981
CONNECTICUT COLLEGE LIBRARY
NEW LONDON, CT 06320

Secretary Haig

Foreign Policy and the American Spirit

May 16, 1981



United States Department of State
Bureau of Public Affairs
Washington, D.C.

Following is a commencement address by Secretary Haig before Hillsdale College in Michigan on May 16, 1981.

A Spanish philosopher once wrote that the true mission of higher education was to teach vital ideas. Perhaps the most vital idea you can learn from your college years is that self-respect is fundamental to the individual. I would add that self-respect is also fundamental to the nation.

At times, over the past several years, it must have seemed to you that our country had forgotten this idea. The American people experienced profound self-examination and even self-doubt. Somehow the great motivating goals of the past had lost their power. We searched, seemingly in vain, for an objective to guide the future. Our confidence was shaken; our values were questioned; our institutions were attacked.

A loss of momentum and confidence at home was bound to affect our standing in the world. Our self-doubt transmitted itself to others who depended on us. Doubt of the present easily became fear for the future.

I believe this era in our national life has now drawn to a close. We have rediscovered ourselves as Americans. We are confident again, our values are sound, and our institutions are worth defending.

America's new confidence is founded in an old tradition: respect for the irrepressible genius of the individual. One of the marks of this genius is man's ability

to glimpse a remote future and to be inspired by it. As the President has put it: Americans have begun to dream again of a better future. Americans have begun to believe again that this future, remote though it may seem, can be reached.

The resurgence of the American spirit has led to a remarkable consensus in our national life. Never have I seen such a firm and consistent consensus among the people, the Congress, and the Executive. The issue is not whether we should strengthen America but how quickly we can do so. The issue is not whether we should defend our interests abroad but how vigorously we can do so.

In my view, the renewal of American self-respect, pride, and confidence is the most important development in the world today. With this ingredient we can act to restore American leadership. With the restoration of American leadership, the achievement of a more peaceful and prosperous world becomes less remote.

The President has a clear sense of our objectives in foreign policy and a coherent program to restore American leadership. There should be no mystery about American purposes abroad. We want a world hospitable to our society and to our ideals. We seek a world where there can be peaceful change, where nations can settle disputes short of war. We shall work to restore the prospect of a world free from threats of force or the use of force.

Let me discuss very briefly the main lines of action in our foreign policy.

First, we shall insist on greater restraint and reciprocity in East-West

relations. If we are seriously interested in a world where there can be peaceful change, where nations can settle disputes short of war, then we must act to restrain the Soviet Union and its surrogates. The improvement of our military capabilities, despite the cost, underlines our resolve in dealing with Moscow.

Our **second** line of action is to reinvigorate our alliances and friendships. A basic step is the restoration of a sense of confidence and trust in our leadership of the Western world. Irritants are being removed. We are seeking a larger consensus among our allies on common actions. And friends exposed to dangers believe once more that the United States will help them. On my trip to the Middle East and during the recent NATO conference in Rome, the change was evident. Our allies and friends are deeply appreciative of a more robust American leadership but also one more sensitive to their interests.

Third, we are seeking a more just and responsible relationship with the Third World. The developing states are beginning to see the difference between the offers of the East and the offers of the West. The Soviets bring weapons, a pervasive presence, and, eventually, a

client-state relationship. The West brings economic development, science, technology, and humanitarian assistance. We will encourage the movement toward association with the West. It is in our interest to do so, and it offers the best hope for the developing states themselves.

Fourth, and finally, the President has advocated a revolutionary program to cure America's economic ills. The combination of spending and tax cuts, the regulatory reforms, are essential elements of fiscal responsibility. We have seen, very clearly, that an ailing American economy ultimately does great harm to our foreign policy.

The framework for action that I have outlined today draws upon an American consensus convinced of the worth of our society and the rightness of our cause. It is neither a boast nor a call to arms. Moderation and a willingness to negotiate will always be an essential part of American statecraft. But there must be restraint by others as well. Our allies--and our adversaries--must know that we are reliable. We shall not be passive when our interests are threatened.

Clearly, the restoration of American leadership in the world will not be easy. As Justice Learned Hand once put it: We shall have to be content with short steps; we shall be obliged to give and take; and in the end, we shall have fabricated an imperfect instrument. But as we take these steps, we go forward made confident by the spirit of liberty--the spirit of America. We strive to make of our country, in Hand's words, a signal, a beacon, a standard to which the best hopes of mankind will ever turn.

Your generation now begins to assume this arduous task. It is your privilege to be able to do so in an atmosphere of fresh pride and confidence. Perhaps Benjamin Disraeli captured today's moment best when he said that the youth of the nation are the trustees of posterity. As you become the trustees of America's future, I ask only that you act with a sense of honor and a brave heart. ■

Published by the United States Department of State • Bureau of Public Affairs • Office of Public Communication • Editorial Division • Washington, D.C. • May 1981 • Editor: Colleen Sussman • This material is in the public domain and may be reproduced without permission; citation of this source would be appreciated.